

Defend Buffalo

STATEMENT ON THE TRUMP RALLY DISRUPTION (7/21/19)

27. JULY 2019 | DEFENDBUFFALO



The following is an account and clarification of what happened during the disruption of the Trump rally that was planned for the morning of Sunday, the 21st. Due to logistical and time constraints, only a few of the key organizers were involved in writing this; however, we have attempted to present here, as accurately as possible, the perspective of the group as a whole. There has been a lot of misinformation circulating in the aftermath of the event, in both more “mainstream” media sources and on right-wing social media, and we hope to clear up some of the misunderstandings that we’ve encountered.

I.

1. No particular pre-existing group organized this event. The original organizers included individuals affiliated with a variety of local radical organizations, as well as independent revolutionary leftists.

2. Our group was in no way associated with Democratic politician Nate McMurray’s Bidwell Parkway protest, and did not “break off” from that Bidwell Parkway protest. The original group of antifascists was present at Colonial Circle shortly after 10am, hours before the Trump supporters

had even arrived. It was only after McMurray's rally ended that a few people trickled in from Elmwood, but the vast majority of the people who joined the antifascist demonstration were neighbors from surrounding streets who saw the gathering of Trump supporters for what it was — a group of belligerent fascists (mostly from out of town) coming to their neighborhood to stir up trouble and intimidate locals.

The original organizers explicitly formulated the Colonial Circle action as an alternative to the Nate McMurray rally and the liberal activism it represents, which we see as putting the career interests of a handful of Democratic politicians and nonprofit bureaucrats over the need to effectively combat the forces that have helped Trumpism spread. We do not believe in the false solutions offered by the Democratic Party or other capitalist swindlers.

3. Likewise, our group was in no way associated with the Western New York Peace Center, despite the presence, later on, of a small number of Peace Center members (including Victoria “Vicki” Ross).

4. The main objective of this action was to ensure that, as much as possible, the extreme right could not use the pro-Trump rally as a platform to normalize and spread its ideology, an ideology which promotes active violence against marginalized people. Fascists should not be able to take over public spaces without resistance.

By actively occupying the space as militant anti-fascists, we ensured that the rally was much smaller than it could have been. Over the course of the day, we saw cars covered in pro-Trump bumper stickers circle the park, see what was happening there, and drive away. Because of this, we believe that there would have been many more Trump supporters in that park if we had not taken space in it early on. If we had not been there, it is likely that the Trump supporters would have been able to occupy the entire park well before the arrival of the liberal activists coming from the Nate McMurray event. We're not the only ones who think that our presence affected attendance. Rus Thompson, one of the organizers of the Trump rally, agrees — he stated in an interview that the rally would have been much bigger if we had not confronted their demonstration. ([Interview](#))

We also wanted to make clear our active opposition to the views of those Trump supporters who *weren't* driven away by our presence; we wanted to express our opposition to these people *to their faces*. Every time a person is allowed to express fascist or crypto-fascist views publicly without immediate concrete opposition, fascist ideology is normalized a little bit more.

5. We also wanted to achieve these objectives in a way that minimized the potential risk for us and our allies as much as possible. We believe that we were more successful in doing so than liberal activists such as Vicki Ross who came later and tried to hijack our strategy. These activists mainly attempt to ensure “peace” through cooperation with the police, many of whom are Trump supporters themselves (more on this later). We believe that this is a dangerous approach. In these cases, we cannot rely upon the police to protect us; we must actively work to protect one another ourselves.

To give one example: Whenever Trump rallies or other fascist events occur, far-right violence has been common not only *during* the rallies, but *afterwards*, when reactionaries follow individuals leaving the rally in order to attack them once they’re alone. To prevent this from happening, antifascists escorted people to and from their vehicles and homes, so people were not jumped on their way out. It appears that our efforts here were mostly successful, with two exceptions. We will say more about this shortly, but first we want to examine the organizers and attendees of this pro-Trump gathering in a bit more detail.

II

1. Make no mistake, the rally held by Rus Thompson and June Chapman was in effect a fascist demonstration, regardless of what those who organized it claim. The event, which was allegedly supposed to be a “peaceful demonstration” organized by Rus Thompson and June Chapman, included right-wing militia members and even proud white supremacists. This is the same Rus Thompson also spoke at the Spirit of America rally which took place in Niagara Square in 2017, alongside Sherrif Tim Howard who’s department has been responsible for twenty-five deaths (some under very suspicious circumstances) at the Erie County Holding Center, since Sheriff Howard took office. (Edit: the number of deaths at the Holding Center is now 25, we have been informed another person died the day this article was published.) White supremacist group Aryan Renaissance Society was also present at this Spirit of America rally.



(Pictured above: Scott Lacy and Todd Biro, violent white supremacists from the organization Aryan Renaissance Society, local affiliates based in Niagara Falls. This picture was taken at the Spirit of America Rally in 2017 where Rus Thomopson previously spoke. Another example of a pro-America pro-Trump event with a significant fascist turnout.)



(Sheriff Tim Howard speaking at Spirit of America Rally in 2017 in front of a confederate flag.)

More and more, **these sorts of rallies are becoming an acceptable platform for proud, open, violent fascists to spread their ideology.. This is partly due to far-right extremists being emboldened by Trump's violent and racist rhetoric; however, white supremacy has always been instrumental to the foundation of this country: the genocide of indigenous people, the enslavement of African people, the historical and continuing restriction of "legal" immigration along racial lines, etc.. Trump has merely taken the mask off of this deeply rooted racism, and as we saw in our city at both the Spirit of America rally in 2017 and the Trump rally in Colonial Circle, many of his "patriotic" supporters are taking their masks off as well.**

2. At least one violent incident took place, and it is likely that a second did as well. Both were instigated by the other side. The first happened shortly before the rally had officially begun. Only a few Trump supporters had arrived at this point, and found the circle occupied by antifascists. One

Trump supporter approached an anti-Trump demonstrator, tearing his cardboard sign from his hands, punching him in the face. The police initially detained the Trump supporter as a result of the attack, but he was released after a few minutes. The anti-Trump demonstrator had a cut on his face, but managed to hold out the rest of the protest with no major injuries. Antifascist street medics on site were able to assist with the wound. The second alleged incident did not occur at the circle. A WBEN radio caller who was a Trump supporter at the rally bragged about punching someone on a side street while going back to their car. ([Source](#)) As mentioned above, it is common for fascists to target people after rallies, usually singling out vulnerable people. The man pictured below is the Trump supporter who initiated the first fight.



3. Open, proud fascism and white supremacy were alive and well on the Trump side of the demonstration. One man in a white tee-shirt and MAGA hat can be seen giving a Hitler-salute more than once.



(A video of man pictured above can be found [here](#).)

This man with a MAGA hat below told anti-Trump protesters that he “would rather vote for nazis than socialists”. Socialists want to build working class power and establish democracy in the workplace, whereas the nazis pursued an agenda of ethnic cleansing, genocide and imperialism while re-structuring the economy in the interest of certain sectors of the capitalist class. Comparisons between fascism and socialism that conflate the two are one way in which the right has managed to “normalize” fascism as an acceptable position in 2019 U.S. politics.



Other attendees of the Trump crowd in Colonial Circle include members of the Proud Boys, a violent fascist street gang linked to neo-nazi groups. Proud Boys have been well known for street violence and associate with groups like Patriot Prayer, American Guard (formerly Soldiers of Odin USA, created by Brien James, founder of Vinlanders Social Club whose members have been linked to up to nine murders.) The Proud Boys were also videotaped in the gang-beating of protesters outside the Metropolitan Republican Club in New York City, alongside members of Battalion 49 and 211 Boot Boys, two other racist bonehead crews based in NYC. In addition, the Proud Boys were present at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, where neo-nazi James Alex Fields murdered anti-racist activist Heather Heyer. There are multiple Proud Boys and affiliates within the City of Buffalo. The ones pictured below were present at the Trump rally, and can be seen giving the “white power” hand sign and wearing a Proud Boys tee-shirt.



4. **The right-wing extremists present at the Trump rally acted as if the police were their allies, and seemed to take police protection for granted in a way that we, as radical leftists many of whom are black, brown, and/or trans, could not.** The Proud Boys mentioned above were the last three Trump supporters present at Colonial Circle and chose to hide behind remaining police once the rest of the Trump crowd cleared out. One of them posted on facebook shortly after the event, highlighting the collaboration that often occurs between police and fascist groups and the fact that many police officers share sentiments with fascist demonstrators.



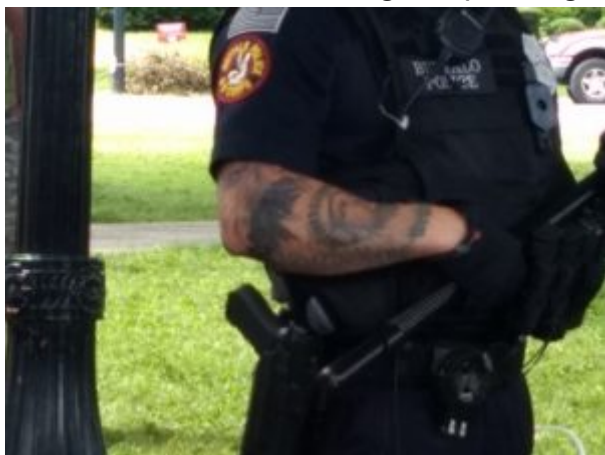
Benjamín Bäuer

I stayed, the last three of us were encircled by the leftists and a single officer drove by got out and stood between us. We were just sitting on one of the benches talking. Around 4:20 we made a joke to the officer "I think you guys had enough overtime I think it's time for us to leave" the officer smiled walked us to the end of the circle and waved and said "maga"

33m Like



Often times, the police are members of these groups themselves. Another police officer at the rally was pictured with the slogan "Molon Labe", a right-wing dog-whistle commonly used by militias such as the Three-Percenterers (III%). The phrase means "come and take them", referring to the fact that these militiamen refuse to give up their guns to the government.



Apparently, this officer doesn't realize that in the event of a government weapons confiscation, the police would be the ones doing the confiscating. Three-Percenterers have been tied to other extremist and pro-confederate groups, and members have been involved in incidents ranging from armed standoffs to bomb plots. The Three-Percenter militia also provided security at the deadly Unite the Right rally mentioned earlier, alongside neo-nazi groups. Incidentally, some Three-Percenterers were present at the rally in Colonial Circle.



5. To summarize: because of the real connection that many police officers have to the far right, we did not trust them to protect us, and believe that strategies that use “nonviolence” to justify collaboration with the police are in fact wind up promoting violence by empowering both fascists and their sympathizers within the police force. We had our own plan to keep our people safe, and insofar as we were able to execute that plan, it was quite effective. But by interfering with this pre-existing plan, Vicki Ross and her allies were in effect working to sabotage it, and thus putting everyone on our side in greater danger of violence.

Fascism is a serious, existential threat — not only to marginalized people, but to the wider community as a whole. The fact that so many types of far-right extremists can openly rally, and even attack people, alongside so-called “patriots” who stand by and do nothing should be cause for concern. Whether or not June Chapman and Rus Thompson intended for these groups to be here is unimportant. We cannot rely on Trump supporters to remove other fascists. We cannot rely upon the police to do so either. And we *also* cannot rely on Democratic politicians or non-profit careerists to mount ef-

fective resistance, because these groups, just like the police, have a direct, material interest in preserving the same violent settler-colonial project of which fascism is the ultimate and most extreme expression. No amount of superficial pandering and appropriation of revolutionary rhetoric by the aforementioned groups changes this fact.

Fascism stems from contradictions within capitalism. If we are to truly confront and defeat fascism, we must dismantle capitalism and the settler-colonial system that it has built, and that includes confronting the U.S. imperialist police state and everyone and everything that is objectively allied with it. Pointing this fact out, and having it inform our strategy, will make our resistance to fascism *more* effective, not less, and anyone who doubts this need only look at what happened this Sunday for objective proof of this.

—

Submitted by anonymous disruption-demo organizers.

If you have any submissions or tips on local fascist activity, please send the info to **defend716@riseup.net**